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SUBJECT: Uruguay: 2008 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

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¶1. The level of cooperation and intelligence sharing on counterterrorism related issues greatly improved in 2008, especially at the working level where officers in law enforcement and security services recognized the importance of conducting proactive investigations, sharing intelligence with the United States, and working cooperatively with regional partners. The government of Uruguay (GOU) generally cooperated with the United States and international institutions on counterterrorism efforts, and it has begun implementing a 2004 money laundering law more robustly. Uruguayan banking and law enforcement agencies have mechanisms in place to identify financial assets, individuals, and groups with links to terrorism, but discovered neither terrorist assets in Uruguayan financial institutions nor terrorist operatives in Uruguay. In October, the parliament passed new legislation to create a specialized organized crime unit to prosecute crimes including terrorism and terrorist financing. The judges and prosecutors were named in December and the unit will be launched in 2009.

¶2. Uruguay's most notable contribution to the global fight against terrorism, if only indirectly, is its substantial commitment to UN peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Africa and other regions, including a contingent to the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai. Uruguay provides the greatest number of UN peacekeepers per capita of any UN member state. Although these efforts are not specifically focused on fighting the GWOT, Uruguayan officials believe that using the country's diplomatic and military resources to fight global instability serves to address root causes of terrorism like political, economic and social instability. In 2008 Uruguay showed increased commitment in both in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In Haiti, the GOU added an Air Force element to conduct aerial surveillance and assumed the port security mission with 16 new Boston Whaler boats located at eight ports throughout Haiti. In the DRC, the Uruguayan peacekeepers have been instrumental in maintaining stability in the most difficult region and the GOU recently extended participation for an additional year despite some domestic criticism.

¶3. In 2008 Uruguay significantly increased participation in joint military training. It hosted the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) South in September, took second place in the Force's Commando Counter Terrorism Competition in the U.S. in June, and it participated for the second time in the multinational training exercise, PANAMAX in August. This is a significant improvement over past years' reluctance to engage in security cooperation, and indicates that Uruguay is moving beyond the aftermath of the thirteen-year period of military dictatorship ending in 1985. Still, the government of Uruguay is hesitant to fully participate in some joint military training. Also, the various agencies involved in anti-terrorism efforts need better coordination.

¶4. Uruguay is a member of the MERCOSUR Permanent Working Group on Terrorism, together with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Bolivia. The group facilitates cooperation and information sharing among countries combating terrorism. The focus on the Tri-border region of Argentina, Paraguay, and

Brazil, expanded to the porous and scantily-monitored Uruguayan-Brazilian border. National efforts to improve border and port security are also underway, especially as they relate to drug trafficking. For example, in 2008 the GOU purchased a radar system that will extend control over the air space to cover northern Uruguay's border with Brazil. Uruguay was also active in a range of international counterterrorism efforts, particularly in the Rio Group and the OAS.

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